

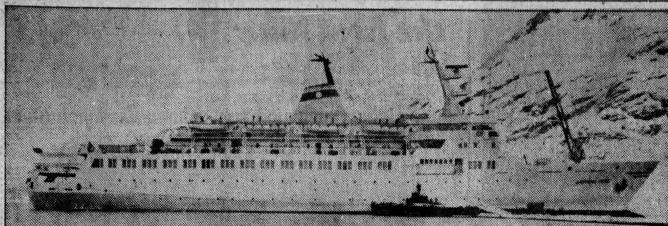


Melissa Manchester  
exorcises her  
devils/D5

The opera  
extends its  
range and season/D5

# ENTERTAINMENT

Toronto Star, Saturday, January 27, 1979, Section D, pages D1-D12



Russian luxury liner is a floating movie set for Bear Island

## The chilling price of an icy spectacle

ABOARD THE LYUBOV ORLOVA — "You've got to come up with something television can't," insists Peter Snell, producer of Alistair MacLean's Bear Island — at \$9.3 million the most expensive and danger-ridden Canadian movie ever made.

"For the big screen, you've got to come up with spectacle."

Spectacle there is — all around us. We are entering, with movie cameras pointed straight ahead, Glacier Bay National Monument, 3.2 million acres of protected, permafrost-carpeted wilderness. It's one of Alaska's most awesome natural tourist attractions, winter and summer.

Ahead of us on three sides, raw glacial landscape. Glaciers tall as four CN Towers (walls of ice 6,000-feet high; 14,000-foot mountains that look easily climbable; flying overhead, bald eagles, black and white mergansers, Bonaparte gulls and cormorants; in the sea, playful sea lions, dolphins, seals and a few whales not yet gone southward. And sighted in the distance, icebergs that appear no higher than pinpricks, but which are ruthless to smaller boats.

Our transportation is just as unusual: A floating movie studio which actually is a Russian luxury liner chartered for three weeks as home base for 103 movie technicians and actors plus 101 Russian crew members whose numbers include a KGB political officer making certain there's no fraternizing between the two groups.

Surprisingly, the KGB man places selected reading material in the ship's lounge every day. A red-jacketed paperback, Lenin On The Socialist State, and pamphlets like U.S.S.R. Industry Over 60 Years. Over the loudspeaker, particularly in the early mornings, blares dour Russian folk music, interrupted, ironically, by Paul McCartney's Band On The Run.

Heading the passenger list and the Bear Island cast: Vanessa Redgrave, Donald Sutherland, Richard Widmark, Lloyd Bridges, Christopher Lee and Barbara Parkins.

Along with them, Canadian actors Larry Dane, Patricia Collins, August Schellenberg, Michael Reynolds, Joseph Golland, Candace O'Connor, and Nicholas Courtney.

A joint British-Canadian undertaking, Bear Island's been a star-studded but star-crossed effort from the start.



SID ADILMAN  
in Alaska

Filming, under way since the middle of November (for seven weeks in Stewart, B.C. before shipping out), has been dogged every foot of its icy way by tragedy and near escapes from death and injury.

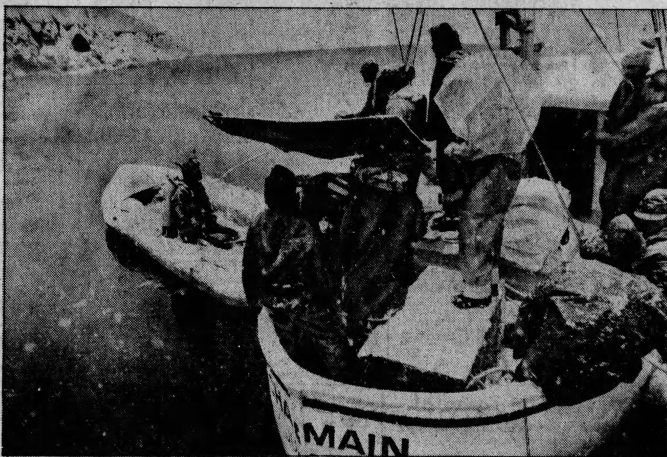
A Stewart helicopter pilot crashed and died while transporting camera equipment. Don Sharp, Bear Island's British director, and four senior movie crew were trapped by a sudden whitout and

raging winds on a B.C. glacier for three days, without food or proper clothing.

At Summit Lake, B.C., temperatures plummeted to a staggering 58 below (Fahrenheit), and director of photography Alan Hume lost feeling in his fingers to frostbite. Conditions were so grim that people closing their eyelids would find them frozen shut. Unprotected noses went numb and white and stayed that way for weeks.

But here on the Lyubov Orlova, with Hume's fingers restored through acupuncture applied by the Russian ship's doctor and with outside temperature an unexpectedly mild 36 degrees (Fahrenheit), the Bear Island company warms to the approaching view.

"A trinity," sighs Barbara Parkins, out on deck with several others to watch the



Film crew sets off for shooting on the icy shores of Glacier Bay



Donald Sutherland, Barbara Parkins and Lloyd Bridges star in movie struck by tragedy

arrival. "I've never seen anything like it," beams Lloyd Bridges who's travelled all over the world making movies.

"I'm a sun nut," declares a deep-tanned Richard Widmark, "but this is a fabulous area."

Exclaims producer Snell: "You wave a camera in this part of the world and you

can't lose. Hollywood is getting damn good in TV using the backdrop, but people are more sophisticated. You may remember Ice Station Zebra (the first of 12 MacLean thrillers to reach the screen). MGM attempted to do a big ice picture, but they did it in a sound studio. I just don't think you can do that 10 years later. Audiences are much more sophisticated. They can tell Styrofoam snow."

Published in 1971, Bear Island (sales, \$ million world-wide) dealt with a film unit and its murder intrigue while mixed in with a team of adventurers up north. The movie's plot, rewritten with MacLean's cheerful endorsement, now focuses on a United Nations global weather study group that inadvertently discovers a cache of gold thought lost in World War II. Greed leads to violence, murder and screaming wilderness chases on hydrocopters (a Swedish transport vehicle that runs on snow, ice, and water and which has never been seen on screen before).

"Alistair MacLean," says Snell, "at least assures you of some success going in. Three in every eight households in the world have a MacLean novel — 60 million copies have been sold to date. He's certainly sold better than Ian Fleming."

"No one has come near Alistair MacLean in the action adventure field. If you're going into action adventure, you're better off with MacLean than a Fleming. The James Bond pictures are fast running out of gimmicks. Action adventure will always work better in the long run if you stay away from gimmicks."

The 37-year-old, Calgary-born Snell (an economics graduate from the University of British Columbia and later production chief of England's British Lion Films) has been trying to steer Bear Island to the screen for two years.

A chance meeting with Michael Spencer, then head of the Canadian Film Devel-

opment Corp., resulted in his scouting for Canadian financing and official Anglo-Canadian underwriting for the project.

The budget breaks down this way: \$3 million from the Toronto-based Selkirk Film Holdings; \$1.8 million from Toronto Dominion Bank; \$1.2 million from the Bank of Montreal; and \$3.3 million from the United Kingdom's subsidiary of Columbia Pictures.

The Canadian Film Development Corp. provided \$100,000 in seed money and now, paid back, will receive half of one per cent of gross profits.

"I was anxious to get as many names as possible," says Snell, "and Columbia wanted a balance of artists for foreign markets and for possible U.S. TV sale. We're a Canadian movie and we got Donald Sutherland. For the U.S. market, we've got Richard Widmark and Lloyd Bridges. Barbara Parkins is known in U.S. TV, and she's Canadian, too (born in Vancouver). Vanessa Redgrave is for the U.K. and foreign market, and I'd worked with Christopher Lee before."

Abrupt weather changes were not anticipated. Two days after our arrival, choppy seas prevent scheduled filming of the disembarking. Radio communication to the outside world is cut off for 48 hours.

"We've got to be here," claims a composed Snell. "If we go further north, we'll lose the light. Up there, they've got only two to three hours of daylight. Here we have five, at least. In Stewart, we lost about a week because of the bad weather; overnight, six feet of snow. Roads to the location site up the mountain blocked off for days. Then 26 miles of treacherous driving for cast and crew. Now this! Despite everything, we've had the chance to shoot the most spectacular sequences under optimum conditions."

The logistics, admits production man-

See CHILLING/page D3

## Women's roles are hot in a sizzling season

By Alan Guellet

It's a twist on the man for all seasons. Let's call it the season for all women.

A remarkable emergency of new meaty roles for actresses. And a company of Toronto women who can more than handle the job.

What a season it is for local theatres. They've got hits. The plays for women are among the biggest. The Club, Dusa, Fish, Sias and Vi. And now Waiting For The Parade, which closes next week despite runaway crowds.

That's one of the frustrations of this kind of season: Established theatres of 150 to 250 seats facing the frustration of closing a show when it could go on selling out for weeks more.

"I know what's happening here has never happened anywhere," Fiona Reid says with conviction. She starred in two hit plays, Ashes and Waiting For The Parade, since debuting last spring as queen of TV's King Of Kensington.

"Instead of doing plays with the conventional women's roles — oh, here comes the breakdown and here's when she's stitching — we're getting the chance to play so many new notes on our instruments."

Pam Brighton, who completed a hat trick of three hits in the past year (Ashes, The Club, and Dusa, Fish, Sias And Vi) says: "The excitement is that some of these women are getting great roles for the first time. It's nothing for men to get great roles; they've had them for years.

That makes these women very enthusiastic. That's why their work has the edge on men's work right now.

"People are going to the theatre to see women now because women's aspirations and the image of women have shifted — while in the real world there has been no shift in the balance of power. That's why these roles are dynamic. The theatre takes on a new life to the audience because it appeals to something in the back of their minds."

"It's post-feminist," Reid adds, pointing to the success of Ashes, in which she and R. H. Thomson played a childless couple struggling with their hang-ups and the medical profession in striving to conceive their own child: "Now we're talking about men and women, and that's an audience."

And there is a new serious theatre audience in this town, one that's grown with the 1970s theatre scene. It's emerging as a demanding audience and it seems to welcome the more exciting treatment of roles played by women.

It's also an audience that has gained some of its most vivid impressions of Canada's history and contemporary social relations from experiences at the theatre.

"There's a great degree of alternate tastes in this country," actress Clare Coulter observes. "Don't you think there's a new sensibility for people who aren't part of the action — more sympathy with the victims? Canadians know

what it's like sitting around without any power."

Coulter won raves portraying a Quebecer from childhood to old age in Le Temps D'Une Vie, in Tarragon's hit production of Lillian Hellman's Toys In The Attic, and, currently in a powerful role as a German-Canadian woman in war-time Canada in Waiting For The Parade. She's rehearsing William Luce's

The Belle Of Amherst, a one-woman play about Emily Dickinson, opening next week.

"Since my childhood there's been a whole new feeling about what life is — there's no God, nothing coming at the end, our resources are finite. People are looking for new concepts of fairness and justice as we look at our own lives and history."

Brighton adds: "If you want to portray how the world actually runs, your play has to examine the men because they always run the world. Women are interesting as victims."

Playwright John Murrell agrees: "With men you get more of the sweep of history — with women, you can more easily portray how people feel."

Murrell wrote Waiting For The Parade, the emotionally delicate story of five Calgary women who wait through World War II while the men fight it. "Because the men's side has already been done so well. In terms of massive historical events — like the war and the Depression — women react more immediately. It makes them a better barometer of social conditions."

As performers, Murrell finds women more dynamic. "One of the exciting things about working with women now is that the parts change with each actress."

Susan Hogan, who in Waiting For The Parade plays the young pacifist Eve, a school teacher married to a 53-year-old war-mongering Scot, didn't want the part at first.

"I don't like playing women who are wimps, just as much as I don't want to play a sex object," explains Hogan, whose striking beauty has frustrated her search for rewarding roles. "It shakes the roots of what women are trying to put together. I've played naive women for 12 years."

Both she and Reid altered their scripts for Waiting For The Parade — with Murrell's support — while the play was in rehearsal. Reid's became less sexy; Hogan's less "wimpy."

"Too many people — audiences, writers and directors — want something safe," says Hogan. Yet, she points out, the

See HOT/page D3



Susan Hogan, Pam Brighton, Charmion King and Fiona Reid

# Chilling action on film

(Continued from page D1)

ager Brian Burgess, "are a total nightmare. U.S. legislation prohibits mechanized vehicles from the terrain in Glacier Bay National Monument because they would disturb the fragile wilderness.

"We had to post a \$200,000 bond and after talks with Washington and complaints that there would be a public outcry if we got our vehicles out there, we have been allowed to use them to traverse our own set (a few huts built near the water's edge and accessible only by a jerry-built dock). We have to carry camera equipment off by hand. It's really a physical picture."

Another "storm" blew up in British Columbia over the rental of the Russian liner.

"We put out a call world-wide, but we wanted a Canadian liner," explains Snell. "Canadian Pacific had its boats in dry-dock and wanted \$20,000 a day, and still had a lot to do to get one ready and in working order. The Russians, anxious to

break into the world cruise market, bid way below that. Total rental for the Lyubov Orlova, fully staffed, comes to \$6,000 per day for 21 days."

It has other benefits. For sale in its tuck shop and bars are tins of black caviar at \$10 each; Russian fur hats at \$40, and Armenian cognac, \$8 a bottle. And meals to please an underground gourmet: Herring salad, borscht, smoked salmon, and chicken cutlets.

Snell has rights to six more MacLean novels, including *The Way To Dusty Death* (car racing) which is planned for production this fall in Montreal, Italy and England. *Bear Island* is set for release this Christmas.

"This," he says, pointing to the scenery, "is just the beginning. *Bear Island's* got the usual MacLean action; there are always people being blown up; things always explode over their heads; and there are a couple of spectacular sequences in which people get killed.

"I wouldn't want to be anywhere else at this moment."